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Realization by educators of the educational problems faced by Spanish-speaking children resulted in a 1965-68 Western States Small Schools Project at Pecos, New Mexico, which sought to establish the study of Spanish as an integral part of daily classroom activities in the elementary school. The objectives of the Spanish Program were (1) to increase oral fluency in Spanish, (2) to begin instruction in Spanish reading and writing, and (3) to develop appreciation and awareness of Spanish culture. Daily activities and audio-visual materials were used to enlarge the children's vocabulary. The results were that by acquiring literacy in the mother tongue, the children were able to appreciate the value of their own culture, and Spanish was accepted as a medium of communication. The program further helped the Spanish child improve his adjustment to the bicultural environment prevalent in New Mexico. (CM)

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# TEACHING SPANISH TO THE SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILD

1965-1968

# **TEACHING SPANISH TO THE SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILD**

**1965-1968**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE  
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**WESTERN STATES SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT  
FOR NEW MEXICO**

REPORT OF

## **TEACHING SPANISH TO THE SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILD**

**1965-1968**

**STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

CAPITOL BUILDING  
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO  
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**WESTERN STATES SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT FOR NEW MEXICO**  
**STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

**AUGUST 1968**

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## INTRODUCTION

The program at Pecos, New Mexico, has been an exciting one. The program consultant, Mr. Henry Pascual, got the program off to a good start and gave the program the support it needed to attract visitors.

The entire staff at Pecos showed an interest in the program and assisted wherever possible. Mrs. Olivia Fincheira, the teacher, brought enthusiasm and tireless effort to the program. She and the program grew over the three-year period. The program was a realization of Mr. Pascual's dream, and it was through his determination that Spanish for the Spanish-Speaking Child was initiated.

As you read the report, you will realize that similar programs should be introduced in many of our New Mexico communities.

MRS. ELLEN HARTNETT DIGNEO  
*Director*

Western States Small Schools Project  
for New Mexico



***Henry Pascual, consultant to the program, teaches a lesson.***



# **OUTCOMES OF THE PECOS PROJECT**

. . . . **Henry Pascual**  
**specialist in modern foreign languages**  
**State Department of Education**

During the past five years, educators throughout the Southwest have increasingly felt the need for providing solutions to the many educational problems faced by the Spanish-speaking children in our schools. With the advent of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, much emphasis has been placed on the teaching of English as a second language, remedial reading, pre-school adjustment programs, and other services aimed at providing skills for these children in order that they may better cope with the curriculum. These efforts have not been in vain. However, there has been some reluctance in instituting well-planned programs for making the mother tongue of these children a medium of instruction. As a matter of fact, school policy throughout the region has been one of saturation of English and extinction of the mother tongue. English "bombardment" programs have not had the anticipated effects; prohibition of Spanish has not made the language disappear from the lives of Spanish-Americans. The process of education for these children has continued to be marked by slow achievement and a high dropout rate.

The Western States Small Schools Project at Pecos, New Mexico, has sought to establish the study of the Spanish language as an integral part of the daily classroom activities of the elementary school. Although the focus of the project has been to develop basic literacy in Spanish, there has also been a concerted effort to put meaningful content into each lesson, for language without tangible content becomes an insignificant code. The results have been most rewarding and can be listed as follows:

1. A change in community and administrative attitude toward the use and place of Spanish in the school.



2. Development of reading skills which enable students to read easily material designed for native speakers of Spanish at the various levels (grades 1-6).
3. Development of writing skills for self expression.
4. Acquisition of an extended oral vocabulary (Latin-American Spanish) to complement the basic home-acquired Spanish language.
5. A positive attitude from the students toward the study of Spanish.
6. An awareness of the vastness and richness of the Hispanic cultural heritage through the study of geography, children's literature, and Hispanic society.

The demonstration project at Pecos has also helped to try out teacher-prepared units and to demonstrate the feasibility of offering a language arts block in Spanish in grades 1-6.

During the January demonstration conference held this year (1968), it was obvious to all that the Spanish-speaking child can be taught all the basic literacy skills easily and quickly and that their reservoir of natively acquired Spanish language could serve to learn content, especially in the social studies area.

An inestimable and perhaps unmeasurable outcome of this project has been the positive psychological impact the program has had on the children, for they are no longer shy and ashamed to use their mother tongue. They are most anxious to show off their ability to read in Spanish.

Of course, the decision of the school administration to continue the project under Title I of ESEA is testimony of its quality and worth. We will still be able to keep Pecos as our pioneer demonstration school for the teaching of Spanish to the Spanish-speaking child.

## TEACHING SPANISH TO THE SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILD

Pecos, New Mexico

1965-1968

*The Teaching of Spanish to the Spanish-Speaking Child*, a Western States Small Schools Project pilot program, began in Pecos, New Mexico, during the first week of October, 1965, at West Pecos Elementary School. The program was under the direction of Mrs. Ellen Hartnett Digneo, director of the Western States Small Schools Project for New Mexico. Mr. Henry Pascual, Foreign Language Specialist of the State Department of Education, was the consultant.

The teacher, Mrs. Olivia Pincheira, is a native speaker of Spanish with six years of teaching experience in an elementary school in Chile.

The program was a language arts type of instruction at the elementary level, because we believe that Spanish-speaking children need to develop language skills in their mother tongue if they are to become truly bi-lingual and be better equipped to make adequate progress in their study of their second language — English.

Children from the first through the sixth grade were given 30 minutes of daily Spanish instruction for a period of three years.

The objectives of the Spanish Program were:

1. To increase oral fluency in Spanish;
2. To begin instruction in Spanish reading;
3. To begin instruction in Spanish writing;
4. To develop appreciation and awareness of the Spanish culture.

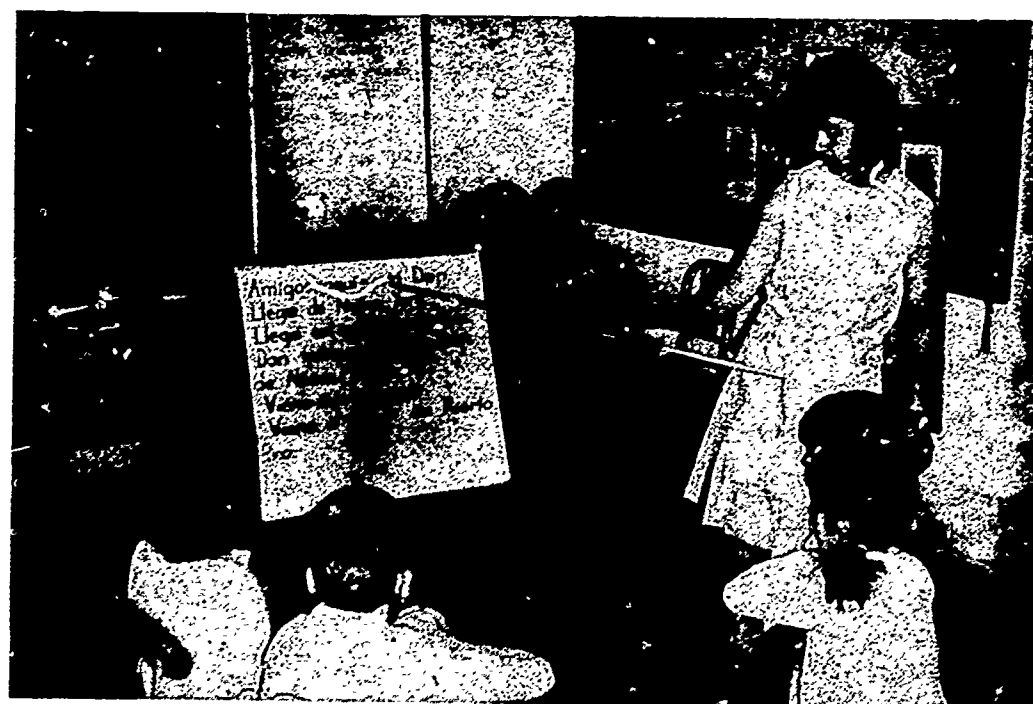
The basic readers used belong to the series "Por el mundo del cuento y la aventura" published by Laidlaw Brothers. The authors are from Puerto Rico. This series provided for a gradual and clear appreciation of the Hispanic culture through the rich materials developed in its books. Of the total ten books in the series, the children enjoyed reading the first eight books with very promising results.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing were daily activities in each and every class, and the children participated with great interest and desire to improve their own native language.

Audio-visual materials, records, reference books, and periodicals



**Mrs. Olivia Pincheira introduces the family.**



**Teacher-made charts were very helpful.**

gave the children the material to enlarge their vocabulary enabling them to enjoy the content of their reading material. Reading included subjects in science, social studies, art, literature, and arithmetic.

The spontaneous cooperation of the superintendent, Mr. Canuto Melendez; the school coordinator, Mr. Tito Herrera; the school principal, Mr. Max Valencia; and the whole school staff provided for the success of the three-year program.

A total of 325 students received daily Spanish instruction during the three-year program.

Besides textbooks, the school provided for library materials, and the most essential needs for the development of the activities.

Many instructional materials were prepared by the teacher. The teacher made charts, pictures, word cards, and especially written exercises to take the place of workbooks for the practice and the evaluation of the skills, since none of these aids were provided by the textbook series used.

Dramatizations on each grade level contributed greatly to the improvement and advancement of the language arts skills and the development of self-confidence and pride in their native culture. Listening to music, learning to appreciate poetry, and participating in declamation were also helpful. Special programs (entirely in Spanish) given at the end of the school year in which all grades participated, gave the parents an opportunity to enjoy the learning activities.

Science lessons constituted a very innovative activity during the three years of Spanish. This was done on all grade levels and proved to be a very enjoyable, educational activity.

At the end of the third year of Spanish instruction, each grade made remarkable progress.

First grade children read the following books with real interest and enthusiasm:

- (a) Mis juegos y cuentos (reading readiness)
- (b) A jugar y a gozar (pre-primer)
- (c) A la escuela (primer)

This gave them a new vocabulary of 115 words which they learned to read. They could also use these words in written and in oral conversations. The vocabulary of the reading book and their personal narrations provided materials for their written work.





***Dramatization and plays were fun.***

The first grade children have learned a number of new concepts. They are now able to converse in better Spanish and to read and to write a large number of words. Several non-Spanish-speaking children in grade one showed a great aptitude toward learning a new language, which tells us that the language teaching should begin at a very early age.

Picture charts and some instructional materials were used to stimulate activities such as speaking and listening. The children also enjoyed records of Spanish stories and songs. They enjoyed and memorized several poems, songs, rounds, and a few dramatizations.

The second grade children completed the following books with very good results:

- (a) Mis juegos y cuentos
- (b) A jugar y a gozar
- (c) A la escuela
- (d) Amigos de aqui y de alla (first grade book)
- (e) Pueblo y campo (this second grade book was not completed)

These books gave the children a vocabulary of 321 words. The reading material included themes in social studies, science, math, and health, besides many stories about family life, games, and songs. Charts made with pictures taken from magazines and units of instructional materials gave the children the tools for conversation and games.



***First graders get ready for reading.***

Each day the new words were used in sentences and short paragraphs — oral and written. Competence in oral and written spelling has proved to be a good way to promote interest and to encourage participation.

For the third grade children, records of stories and songs were very helpful as listening was improved. They completed the following books:

- (a) Mis juegos y cuentos
- (b) A jugar y a gozar
- (c) A la escuela
- (d) Amigos de aqui y de alla
- (e) Pueblo y campo
- (f) Sorpresas y maravillas (this book was not completed)

These books enriched the children's vocabulary with 605 words. This was the more advanced group in all the language arts areas. They were able to listen attentively; they had no trouble in under-



***Picture charts stimulated many activities.***

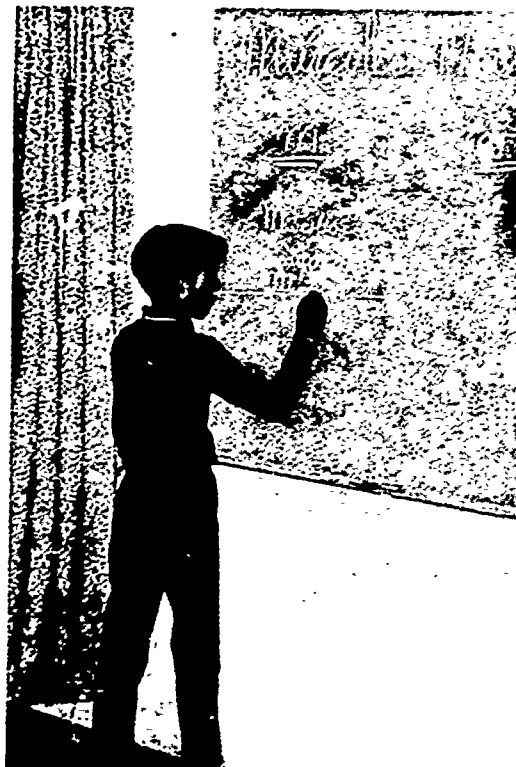


***Everyone wants a turn at reading.***





***Listening is important, too.***



***Blackboard practice in writing led to a short paragraph later.***



***It's fun to read in Spanish.***

standing the narration of a story and the answering of the questions to verify their comprehension.

For the fourth grade children, listening to personal narrations gave the children time for enjoyment and relaxation. They began writing family letters. The following books were completed with very good results:

- (a) A jugar y a gozar
- (b) A la escuela
- (c) Amigos de aqui y de alla
- (d) Pueblo y campo
- (e) Sorpresas y maravillas
- (f) Por esos caminos (this third grade book was not completed)

These children were now familiar with 1,018 words.

Intensive work was done in reading and writing using all kinds of material available: basic readers, library books, charts, cards, etc. Enjoyment and appreciation of Spanish poems, songs, fables, and stories made an interesting listening project. Charts continued to be a very useful device to motivate speaking. Children were often asked to write a short paragraph of their personal opinion about the lesson of the day and read it to the class or hand it to the teacher for evaluation.

After each unit, a comprehensive test was given to evaluate progress, to identify possible difficulties, and to study possible solutions.

The fifth grade children completed the following books:

- (a) A jugar y a gozar
- (b) A la escuela
- (c) Amigos de aqui y de alla
- (d) Pueblo y campo
- (e) Sorpresas y maravillas
- (f) Por esos caminos

By the end of the fifth grade, the majority of the children had a vocabulary of 1,465 words.

Besides the regular reading in the texts, oral expression based on charts and other audio-visual materials, the children were required to do outside readings. The children gave oral and written reports from the readings made on library materials.

Their daily narrations were well prepared in advance. Narrations included topics of family life, country affairs or world news. Also, they liked to talk about the dreams they had.

The six grade children did intensive work on the following books:

- (a) A jugar y a gozar
- (b) A la escuela
- (c) Amigos de aqui y de alla
- (d) Pueblo y campo
- (e) Sorpresas y maravillas
- (f) Por esos caminos
- (g) Nuestro mundo maravilloso (this book was not completed)

By this time, most of the sixth graders had a vocabulary of about 1,515 words which they could use in oral and written exercises.

The sixth grade carried on similar activities as those carried on in the fifth grade. However, more advanced readings and writings were



***The audience listened intently as children read from their Spanish readers.***



***Parents express a desire to keep the program.***

required based on the texts and library books used. The tape recorder was used in all grades.

The programs presented to the parents and to the rest of the school proved to be a contributing factor in self-identification and the development of a sense of pride in their native language.

On January 19, 1968, a statewide conference on Teaching Spanish to the Spanish-Speaking Child was held in Pecos. The program for the day was highlighted with presentations by Mr. Henry Pascual, Specialist in Modern Foreign Languages, State Department of Education; Dr. Sabine R. Ulibarri, Professor of Spanish, University of New Mexico; and Miss Ann Komadina, Consultant in Foreign Languages, Albuquerque Public Schools. Very outstanding demonstrations were done by Mrs. Olivia Pincheira, project teacher.

Throughout the three-year period, Mrs. Pincheira has been invited to participate in state and national programs where she explained the Pecos Program.

The Pecos Program received a total of 266 visitors.

One of the very special outcomes in our program has been the

favorable attitude of the parents who began to realize that their language was accepted. This program has appealed to the Spanish and Anglo children as well as to their parents.

By acquiring literacy in the mother tongue, children are able to appreciate the value of their own culture, and Spanish has now been accepted as a medium of communication. This program has helped the Spanish child improve in his adjustment to the bicultural environment prevalent in New Mexico.

As Dr. Pelayo Fernandez said: "Children in Pecos have the unique opportunity and special privilege to grow and to form not only as normal children, without the complex of being Spanish, but also, as extraordinary children — children that will gain the knowledge of speaking English and Spanish correctly."

Thanks to this program, children have developed self-confidence and pride in their native culture and are becoming a group of real, truly bilingual New Mexicans.

To evaluate the progress, the teacher prepared written exercises for each lesson; and also, for the end of each unit of the readers starting with simple practices of the basic skills. This gave some knowledge concerning the abilities and difficulties of the individual.

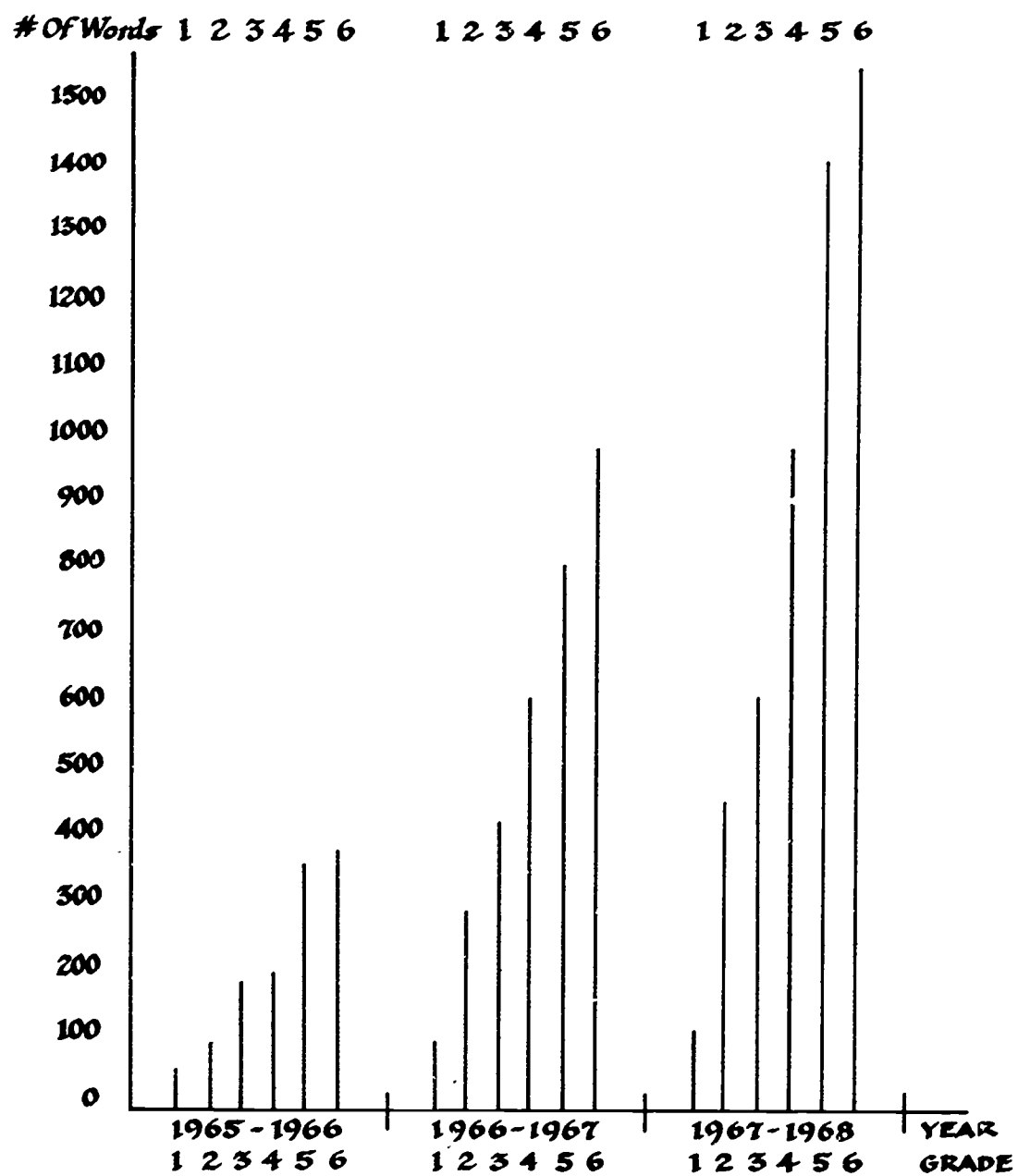
Gradually informal tests were introduced to measure the speed on word recognition, the amount of new concepts comprehended, oral and written vocabulary, exactness in oral reading, speaking, writing; and finally, tests of comprehension and interpretation were given to all grades. Since there were no commercial tests in this area, all tests were made by the teacher. The majority of the simple exercises and informal tests were based on the contents of the basic readers.

During the school year, 1965-1966, many language patterns constituted a problem, but they were gradually erased, and a great improvement has taken place by now in speech patterns.

By the end of the third year, children gained strength in all areas of the language arts; reading, being the most successful one.

The chart on the following page shows the progress achieved in oral and written vocabulary during the school years: 1965-66, 1966-67, 1967-68.





**VOCABULARY CHART (Oral & Written)**

## **EVALUATION OF THE ELEMENTARY SPANISH PROGRAM IN PECOS**

**by**

**The Educational Service Center  
Albuquerque, New Mexico**

The following evaluation of the elementary Spanish Program in Pecos was made by the Educational Service Center in Albuquerque:

"Here is a splendid example of the advantages of teaching Spanish in the elementary level from the first through the sixth grades.

"A master teacher, who not only knows subject matter but understands the youngsters in her classes, exists in this classroom. Happiness could be the key word to describe this activity, and happiness in education naturally leads to knowledge and growth.

"While the room being used in carrying out the program was a 'reactivated' room, through the ingenuity of Mrs. Olivia Pincheira, it has been transformed into a most inspiring area where one immediately feels a Spanish environment.

"The pupils, even though very young, were very happy and anxious to demonstrate that they were learning many Spanish words and sentences.

"There is sufficient evidence to indicate that this program is deserving of much consideration for continued operation on a permanent basis and should contribute greatly to the educational success of the young people who participate in it."